## Eye On Campus

## Bone Woman's Delco Trip Attracts Hundreds

PSU Delco Is "The Highlight" Of Koff's Lecture Tour

By **JOHN MILLER** jmm833@psu.edu

After months of anticipation and planning author and forensic scientist Clea Koff's paid a visit to Penn State's Delco campus. More than 200 students, faculty, and members of the surrounding community filled the Classroom Building lounge on April 13 to get a peek at "the Bone Woman."

Koff spoke for an hour about her life's pursuits, her work her book based on her experienceas a forensic anthropoligist in Africa and Eastern Europe.

Koff was intrigued with the possibility of coming to campus months ago when she learned from English Professor Patricia Hillen that "The Bone Woman" was being put to use in many of the classrooms.

Hillen made arangments for Koff after she agreed to speak at Delco in January. Koff also visited Brown University and Michigan State for guest lectures. Of her visit to Delco Koff said, "this campus is the highlight of my trip," as she took the podium. She expressed her gratitude for being one of many campus "idols."

"It was a secret dream of mine for 'Bone Woman' to make it into class-rooms," she said.

Koff was selected by the United Nations' International Criminal Tribunal to go to Rwanda after the 1994 genocide as part of a 16-member team.

However, her dream suddenly became a nightmare when she encountered the mass graves in Africa and East Europe.

The worst, she said, were in Bosnia.

"The world as I see it filters through the graves I saw. The bodies still had wires and blindfolds on," Koff said.

After comparing what she encountered in Europe and Africa to the sus-

pected genocide currently taking place in Sudan, she had some very strong words for men like the late Slobodan Milosevic who was responsible for the "ethic cleansing" campaign in Bosnia in the mid 1990's.

"How does someone make themselves so superior and arrogant?," Koff rhetorically asked the audience.

"The answer is they are not because those criminals were tried and convicted with evidence gathered by people who they thought they were better than and also from people they killed," she said

Yet throughout the presentation Koff still maintained a sense that she was fulfilling her destiny by reaching out to the dead and by doing so helped to comfort the families they left behind.

"I never questioned what I was doing there. I was tremendously happy and fulfilled to be helping in the field. I only realized after the fact how many dangerous situations our teams got into on missions," she said.

Koff's appearance was, in part, first to promote the fourth printing of "The Bone Woman."

The inspiration came from Koff reading a book titled "Witnesses from the Grave: the Stories Bones Tell" by Eric Stover when she was 18 years old.

Koff is also making personal appearances to increase public awareness of what she calls MPID (Missing Persons Identification Resource Center).

"It's a non-profit organization which will hopefully help identify the remains of 40,000+ Americans," she said.

After about 20 minutes of questions from audience, Koff autographed copies of "The Bone Woman" which were available from campus bookstore.

The long line that stretched from the signing table to the door formed shortly after Koff stepped down from the podi-



"Bone Woman," Klea Koff visited Delco, April 13. She lectured to a crowd of over 200 people.

it, filters through the graves I saw. The bodies still had wires and blindfolds on.

-Clea Koff



Koff signed copies of her book, "The Bone Woman," after her speech.

## Dinner With Koff, A Fullfilling Experience

Commentary by John Miller

Everyone deserves to dine at least once with someone famous.

Although Clea Koff hasn't quite gained celebrity status, the three hours that she shared with me and eight other people including Sophia Wisiewska, chancellor of PSU Delco, are memories that no doubt will stay with us for the rest of our lives.

Last Wednesday evening at the La Belle Époque Café in downtown Media, seemed intimidating since it was my first visit to an authentic French restaurant. Time slowed to a halt as I laid eyes on the "Bone Woman" author for the first time at about 6:45 p.m.

Due to a questionnaire I sent her in January the answers she sent back made me feel like I knew her already and it's what made it such a honor to shake her hand.

From talking to Koff throughout the night she told the eight of us just how fulfilling an experience it was for her in Africa and Eastern Europe as a young ambitious scientist. But finding 500 bodies in the mass grave of the African village of Kibuye will haunt her Koff. Most of the victims were woman and children. The then 23 year old forensic anthropologist was one of 16 scientists chosen by the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal to go to Rwanda to unearth evidence of the 1994 genocide.

"Almost everyone was killed by blunt or sharp force trauma; in other words: hit with clubs or machetes," said Koff.

Koff later undertook six subsequent missions as a member of a UN team that surveyed various mass graves in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo. She wrote "The Bone Woman," about the horrible finds.

Koff was in town to promote her book, which is being printed for the fourth time. In addition, she also promoted what she calls the Missing Persons Identification Resource Center (MPID). It is a non profit organization based in California which she hopes will be able to help find the remains and identify an estimated 100,000 missing persons in the United States.

"We would have to analyze the bodies to determine the demographics of the grave: how many men, women, and children, their ages, their heights, how they died," said Koff.

As the night progressed, the subject of conversation changed slowly from Koff's life and work to a heated discussion of world events and affairs such as Iraq, Iran, President Bush, foreign policy, and history.

Lastly I asked to her before she left the restaurant that night

"Can humans as a race overcome the practice of genocide?"

She answered, "I believe every human being is capable of making the other choice which is to resolve conflict through means that do not involve murder," she said, adding that "most genocide is not caused by monsters like Milosevic, but by the policies of monsters like Milosevic."

## "Bone Woman" Lecture Note Highlights

- At age 23 Koff joined a team of 16 anthropologists to gather evidence for UN war crimes tribunals.

- Koff supports "MPID," an organization that helped identify the remains of 40,000 Americans.

"The Bone Woman" is now in its fourth print.

Photo by John Miller

Koff had dinner with students and faculty, hosted by Proffessor Patricia Hillen.